



Captivated (Part 3) – The Long Game

Matt Chandler – June 11, 2017

Good morning. How are we? Doing well? Excellent. You really know how to make a guy feel welcomed. I appreciate that. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Song of Solomon, chapter 7. We're going to finish up our series on marriage that we called *Captivated*. We're going to wrap that up in our time together today.

I have a couple of things I want to do before we dive into Song of Solomon, chapter 7. The first is to say that although our church is primarily made up of young married couples, there are several thousand singles who sit among us every weekend. They're all over the map in their singleness. Some of them are avowed singles. They plan on being singles for the rest of their lives. They plan on using their lives to make disciples and be a part of the kingdom of God and see that being single creates some space for them to really give themselves over to that.

We have quite a few who are like, "That's not my gift. I don't want that gift. If God tries to give me that gift, I'm going to try to return that gift. I'm just waiting for my person. If you could preach on that, that would help me." We have widowers, and we have divorcees. There are several thousand people who are sitting in this three-week series on marriage kind of going, "Okay, what does this have to do with me?"

I want to just say here on the last week that I read something this week that I just thought, "That's really good. I'm going to steal that." I read it in a book by a man by the name of Peter Scazzero. What he said is that as we've been talking, marriage is a picture of Christ's redemption of the church, of his bride. Marriage is a picture of God's pursuit of the church and ransom of his people. As the church, we are called the bride of Christ.

I know some of you brothers don't like that language, but your wives and daughters have to deal with being called sons of God throughout the Scriptures, so like I say, there is enough in the book to

offend all of us. We are the bride of Christ. One of the things Scazzero said in his book was that marriage is a picture of the depth of God's love.

What he meant by that was... If I think about being married, I have my person. Now that I have my person, that limits the breadth of my love because the depth of my love is one-on-one. Lauren is my person. I don't have other people. I have Lauren. My heart, my mind, my creativity, my energy, my vitality goes to this woman. In so doing, we communicate to the world and to one another the depth of God's love.

Singleness paints another picture because we know from the Word of God that the love of God is not just deep but wide. Singleness portrays and shows the picture of the breadth of God's love. If you're single, you don't have a person. You have a community. As you love that community and walk in that community made up of friends and family and coworkers, as you love like that, what you're communicating then is the breadth of God's love.

The church and the world need both pictures. If you've been listening to this series, and you're a single going, "Okay, if marriage is a picture of Christ redeeming the church for God, buying his bride, then what is my singleness?" I think Peter is onto something. You are communicating the breadth of God's love to the world.

The second thing I want to do is I want us to honor and celebrate a group here. I want to tell you what they did and why we're going to do that. The Village Church, being the size we are, has a communications department. Most churches don't have communication departments; we actually have a communications department.

If you think about *Exodus*, the workbook you got, the videos we showed, all of that was our creative team creating these things. We're after the whole person, not just the mind, but the mind and the senses and the heart. We want the whole person in glad surrender to Christ. Art tends to do that, grab hold of places that aren't just intellectual capacities but kind of stir up our...

About a week and a half ago, the DSVC Awards were held here in Dallas. They featured a large number of successful, creative advertising agencies, big and small, throughout the Metroplex. Think of organizations like American Airlines and different large organizations and their creative teams here in the Metroplex. The only church represented at the DSVC was The Village.

One of the things I love about them is they don't give out participation trophies. I see you giggling, so I appreciate that you're with me on participation. "Hey, you didn't win a game this year, but you know what? Let's celebrate that. Hang this on your wall as just a remembrance of your defeat." What I mean by participation trophies is on their gold awards, they will not give out a gold award if there is no gold-award-winning-worthy participant.

They're like, "The winner of the Judge's Choice this year is no one. Thanks for coming. Good night." They're really serious about the art of it all and the energy around those things. When Kent Rabalais became the executive director of our communications team, here is the standard he set. "Excellent art appreciated by those at the highest level." That's the bar. That's a really high bar, for a church to go, "We're going to create things to which the world goes, 'That's really good stuff.'"

We were invited to this awards ceremony. Here is what happened. The Village took home three awards, one bronze for the *Exodus* handout, one gold for the entire *Exodus* campaign, which was a very collaborative effort, and lastly, we took home the gold for the Judge's Choice award for the entire *Exodus* campaign.

Here is the thing. I love that. That team worked so hard. They're behind the scenes, creating things that stir our affections for Jesus. We rarely even think about what they're doing and how they're doing it, all of the copy that needs to take place. It's a stunning amount of work that these brothers and sisters do.

I think the thing I was most excited about was that the Judge's Choice award was given by a man who is a very well known, very well respected filmmaker. His assistant came up to our team with tears in here eyes saying that this man was not a Christian, was far from the Lord, was not interested, yet the *Exodus* material was haunting him, and he began to dig into his Bible and try to get to the bottom of all of this. We can praise God for that also.

One of my favorite things about the communications team and why I won't have them stand is because despite their unbelievable giftedness at creativity and putting works of art out there, to the man or woman, they're nearly all introverts. If I had them stand up right now, they might resign and get jobs in the secular world, and they're too good, so I'm not going to do that. There are many of them in this room, so will you thank them one more time? Great job, guys. I see you, Jenna. I'm not going to do it.

We're going to finish out *Captivated*. By the way, that is their graphic. Here is what we have done. On week one, we talked about the nature of what marriage is. It is covenant. We enter into a covenant with one another that is not primarily emotive, although there are emotions involved. It is a commitment of the will, that I am giving myself to this person.

We talked about what marriage was, and then last week, we talked about the gift of sexual intimacy from God. Sex is God's idea. That wasn't a work of the Devil. That's not just something we have done, but God, biologically, physiologically, did that, gave that as a good gift. Then he put boundaries around it, because sex has a way of touching the soul in a way nothing else can.

We talked about the fact that the boundaries have fallen for us in good places. The Christian doesn't think sex is dirty. "It's dirty, disgusting, and gross. Save it for the one you love." We don't believe that. We think it's a really beautiful thing that is very powerful, so we need to keep it in the boundaries that the Creator of it has given to us. We talked about that last week.

Here is how I want to end our time together. I want to end our time together talking about marriage by thinking about and looking at how we might continue to cultivate our marriage, where we are today, in our hopes of getting to be, by the grace of God, 85 or 90 years old, still in love, surrounded by grandchildren and maybe even great-grandchildren, grossing out our grandchildren by still being affectionate to one another. I want to talk about how we can do that.

Maybe this is the best illustration. This is the one I have used historically. My wife likes fire in the fireplace. It's not a joke to say that as soon as we are in the low 70's, she will turn on the air and want me to start a fire. She just loves it. I don't get to be the man that has the light switch fireplace. Not to shame you, but how many of you have the light switch fireplace? This is just me being envious. You get home. You're like, "Oh, it's a little chilly."

Not me. I'm a caveman. I have to go find a flint rock, gather some kindling. I look like Tom Hanks in that movie on the island, trying to start a fire. Then you have to make sure it gets enough air. Then you have to tend to it. You can't just leave it alone. That means about every 30 minutes, I have to go back out into the cold and grab more lumber and bring it in and put it in. You have to keep adding logs to the fire or the fire goes out.

Maybe the way to think about our time together is what are the logs we can be adding to the fire in our marriage to ensure that thing stays toasty? Can I use that word *toasty*? I think I can. I just did.

You can't stop me. I did it. All right, let's look at Song of Solomon, chapter 7, starting in verse 1. We read this text last week. I want to draw something else out of it.

"How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies." Brothers, look at me. Don't do it. This is not going to translate. I know I said that last week. I'm trying to serve you well.

I have yet to meet the woman in 2017 who, even if you add that, "...encircled with lilies..." is going to appreciate you saying her belly is like a heap of wheat. Just trust me on this. There are some other things in this poem you can use. Leave that one alone. **"Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle."**

Here is what is happening. I want to draw your attention to this in this text. This is the fourth time in the Song of Solomon that he is addressing his wife. Every other time, he starts at the top of her head and ends at her feet. Now, 20-something years into marriage, he's starting with the bottom of her feet and working his way up. Now, what has happened here is after 20-something years, his perspective of her has changed. The first log you need to throw on the fire of your marriage is...

1. *Pay attention to your spouse.* I've been with Lauren for 20 years. She has been at least four different women in that 20 years. Sometimes, it's a radical change. I went to bed with one woman, and I woke up with another woman in my bed who had different things she liked, different things she didn't want to do, things she was drawn to, things she didn't like at all anymore. It's just confusing. It's discombobulating.

We believe as Christians in progressive sanctification. We believe God is changing us. He is making us more like Christ. He is growing us, and if that is true, that means I live in a house with my wife. The Spirit of God is changing her, growing her, moving her. He's doing the same thing in me. I am not the man she married. She is not the woman I married. We have changed.

A simple illustration. When we first got married, Lauren loved late-night movies. That was our thing. We didn't have any kids. I was travelling full time as an itinerate teacher. We kind of had an apartment over in HEB because it was the closest thing I could get to the airport. I was just travelling and teaching all over the place.

Our thing was, "It's 9:45. What do you want to do? Let's go see a movie." We would go to these late movies and get home at like 1:00 and go to bed and then get up and start again. That is not the woman I am married to right now. I can't even imagine what would happen if I said, "Hey, there is a 10:15 showing of *Wonder Woman*. Let's do it." That will not go. She would say, "Do you not know my day? Do you now know what we have going on?" That would just go badly for me.

If you work for LISD, I think there is nothing you can do about this now. I'm just going to test the waters. When *Rogue One* came out in December, I pulled my kids out of school. I just said, "Hey, I need the Chandler kids."

"What's up?"

"Well, I'm their dad, and I want them."

I didn't want to lie and go, "They all have dentist appointments." I didn't want to do that. I just said, "Hey, I need my kids. I'm their father. I would like my kids. Give me my children."

We went out to AMC, and we watched *Rogue One*. At the apex of *Rogue One*, everything is blowing up, and my 11-year-old, Reid, is so giddy. One tear is going down. He's looking at me like, "You love me, father." I'm like, "I do love you." We all look down, and Lauren is sound asleep at 2:00 in the afternoon. This is not a woman I could take to an 11:00 show anymore, but that is who I married. She has changed. I need to be paying attention.

There are few things that will fan heat and passion into your marriage like paying attention to your spouse. Brothers and sisters, you need to have a radar for when your spouse says, "Oh, I really like that," or, "Man, I love that," or when they linger too long at a store, looking at something they would like to get but can't necessarily afford, or when they look through that magazine and smell that perfume and talk about how nice that perfume is, or whenever they're looking through *Field and Stream* or whatever you dudes are into. "Oh, look at this. The new .257 Weatherly."

You just need to take note. That is a way to bless. "I have a little touch here. I know they've been wanting that." Even something like, "Oh, Mi Dia From Scratch is about to open. I love that place." *Boom*. You need to have a file in your gut for that. You just need to pay attention. "This is what they like. This is what they don't care for. This stresses them out. This does not stress them out. This alleviates stress. This causes stress." This is just paying attention.

You can see that because he is now seeing her differently. Then he goes on to compliment things in her that only he would know about at a certain depth. Let's look there in verse 4. Again, brothers, don't use this. **"Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon..."** That's the one I would stay the farthest away from. **"...which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses."**

Let me explain what is happening in this part of the poem. He is now complimenting things that he has a unique perspective on. Each of these lines is actually tied to a different kind of attribute.

"Your neck is like an ivory tower." That's speaking to her dignity. She is upright. His bride is dignified. **"Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim."** That's about her depth. She has grown in depth.

"Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon." That speaks to her strength. **"Your head crowns your like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple..."** That speaks to the authority by which she walks. Now, here is the unique privilege of a spouse. What we know from earlier in the song is that when they met and started dating, she was extremely insecure.

In fact, at some points, she would say, "Don't look at me, for I am swarthy. I'm not attractive. Don't look at me. Stop looking at me." Now what has happened? She is dignified. She is strong. She has depth. He is held captive by the authority in which she walks. The unique perspective that is his and his alone is to watch his spouse grow in dignity.

If you were to meet my wife and think to yourself, "That is a very dignified woman," or, "She walks in a lot of authority," that would be yours to see and claim, but since we got married when she was 19, what I got to watch was a woman who, when we first got married, hardly would open her mouth and say anything in meetings or around people with personalities. We'll just say it that way. She would just be quiet. She's so brilliant.

On the way home, I would oftentimes say, "Baby, why didn't you say anything tonight?" "I don't want to look dumb." I'm like, "Around that guy? Trust me. You're going to look more brilliant in contrast to him. You need to just believe in your heart." To see her now... What is mine to have that you don't get is who she was at 19 versus who she is now. That's mine. I get to see that. I get to watch that. I get to rejoice in that. I get to marvel at that.

Here is what has happened. "Your dignity, your strength, your authority... I am held captive in your tresses. I am still captivated by you. You are stunning." If you think there is not physical heat there, look at verse 6. **"How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights! Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit."**

This is the appropriate time to remind you that we're reading from the Bible. People think our God is all crusty and really buttoned up. This is about climbing a tree and grabbing some fruit. This is in the Bible. I'm reading out of the Bible. Watch what has happened. Stay away from these, brothers. **"I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine..."** Here is what I think you can use. **"...and the scent of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine."**

I would say to stay away from, "I'm going to climb that tree and grab hold of the fruit." I would go more with, "Your mouth is like the sweetest of wine." He has paid attention, and he knows how to woo. He knows how to romance. He knows how to love. He knows how to speak to her inner beauty and not just her outer beauty. As I pointed out last week, look at how her dignity, her strength, her growth, his growth, has actually turned into a type of aphrodisiac.

In a day and age in which physicality becomes the king or queen of attraction, what we see here 20-something years into marriage is that the depth of soul becomes a fiery aphrodisiac. This is something that needs to be cultivated. This is something that needs to be paid attention to. If you want that marriage, if you want to throw a log on your marriage, be paying attention.

I think the second thing you see here is in her response. Look there at her response. **"It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."** I love her response. Here he is. He has some game. I respect this brother. He's like digging into the soul. "I'm climbing the tree, and your breath is like some apples. You know how I love wine. Your lips taste like that wine." He has some game. I respect this man.

What is her response back? "I like what you're saying. It goes down smoothly. Say some more to me. I love this." She's being flirty back. Here is what I think the second log is here. For most people, the tendency, the drift, as we get older, especially if we get married young, is to get a little crusty, to just

stop being as flirty, to kind of drift toward... We have things we have to get done. That playfulness and affection that is there early on ceases. I think the second log we see here in this interaction is...

2. *Fight for and pursue fun.* You must fight for and pursue fun and what the Bible calls in Titus brotherly affection. You should cultivate a rich and real friendship with one another. You should laugh often, and you should try to create spaces in which fun is the rule. In our four main rules of the Chandler house, one of our rules is, "We're going to have fun. We're going to laugh a lot in this house. Dadgum it. If you're not laughing, bad things are happening. We're going to have a good time. Have a good time right now."

We just want to cultivate an environment where we're serious about laughter and fun. I especially want to do that with my wife. This is free, not in the notes. If it's not fun for your spouse, it's probably not fun. I'm just saying that because I know some of you brothers. "What, baby? I was trying to fight for fun like Pastor said." Dumping cold water on her while she's in the shower probably isn't her idea of a good time.

You just have to find places to have fun. You have to find this. It doesn't mean that since your man is into hunting, you're going hunting. It doesn't mean that because she is into whatever, you're going to go do that. That's not what it means. It means you have to find these spaces where you can laugh and have fun. We want to fight for that. I'm always just trying to think of small, easy ways to let Lauren know I'm thinking about her.

She's singing this weekend. Every time she sings, I will get her phone, and I will take a picture of myself, and I will reset all of her stuff with my picture on it. I know some of you right now are like, "Touch my phone and see what happens," but Lauren has not told me to stop that, so I'm just going to keep doing it. It's just this little, "I'm thinking of you." It's just this little, "I love you." It's just this little, "Hey, I want to play. I'm playing."

When she finally says, "Quit doing that to my phone," then I'll figure out something else. It's just a simple, easy way to go, "I'm thinking about you. I want you to know that I am thinking about you. I love it when you sing." We have to fight for fun. Oftentimes, we'll incorporate the kids in this. One of my favorites is you just put a little bucket of water balloons out with the weakest, saddest water guns you can because you and your spouse have the good ones in the backyard.

You just put a big note on it saying, "Mom and Dad are out back. Come get us." Then you have hoses and like a water cannon. Then you just have a blast. What is this? This is godliness. Laughter is a really good gift from the Lord. We're not to be crusty people. We've been bought with the blood of Christ. We've been reconciled to our Creator. Who should laugh like we laugh? Who should enjoy like we get to enjoy? We're free. Fight for fun. Look at where it goes next.

"Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved."

I think there are three things here I want to point out. I'll start by telling you the story of Dudley Callison. Right after I became a Christian, there was a man who did a lot of work with students in my area. His name was Dudley Callison. One night, there were probably about 20 of us, and Dudley was telling the story of how he got engaged. Here is his story. By the way, if you're single, I'm about to take something from you.

Dudley picked up his girlfriend (soon-to-be fiancé) in his car. She got in the car. They drove out to this lake. This all happened in Arkansas. They got out at this lake, and they get in this canoe. They canoe out to this island in the middle of the lake. I guess there were some interns who set up dinner there and served them dinner. Then this speedboat picked them up. Then they went around the lake on the speedboat.

When they got back to shore, his car was gone, and there was a limousine there. They got in this limousine, and they drove in this limousine out to this small airfield and got in this little plane, and they took off in this plane. They landed back in the hills of Arkansas at some college back there. Then there is this chapel on that campus. It had been set up for a wedding, with all of the candelabras. There was a giant card at the altar that had her name on it.

She walked up and opened the card. It just said, "Will you?" She turned around, and *boom*. He's on the knee, and he proposed. It hasn't even gotten good yet. Then, when they walk out, there is this old, beat-up, rusty truck that they get in, and they ride that truck to this restaurant where he had flown in all of her friends and family and his friends and family. They had this epic celebration that they were engaged.

After everybody went to their rooms and hotels and all of that, he began to explain to her that each mode of transportation was symbolic of part of their life's journey together. The car was symbolic of the normalcy of their life. The canoe represented those times they were going to have to work hard together to get to a goal. The speedboat represented the fun they were going to have. The limo represented when some other thing would be driving the direction of their lives. The plane represented their spiritual journey. The beat-up truck represented growing old together.

Are you serious, Dudley? He was telling this story, and I'm like, "I hope the woman I'm going to ask..." That made me give up. I'm not going to lie. He told that story, and I was like, "Whatever." With Lauren, I was like, "What do you think? What are you doing for the next 50 or 60 years?" No. What can you do? If you heard that story, everything else is... He followed that. They got married on a thirty-first.

To this day, as best I know, on the thirty-first of every month (I think there are six of those a year), he just buys her a gift and puts it somewhere in the house. He doesn't tell her. He gets her a new perfume and puts it in the thing or gets her a blouse she was looking at and just hangs it in her closet. Now, after all of these years, she gets up, and she's looking. God help that brother if he forgets one thirty-first, because she's looking now. "Oh, where is the... Honey, it's the thirty-first." That's too much. That's a lot of pressure.

Here is why I tell you that story. Look at me. Dudley Callison is a natural romantic. That is not most men. It's just not most men. All weekend long, I've seen two reactions to that. I've seen, "That's true. They're... Nope. That's right. Say it again. Most men are not naturally romantic." That's okay. Here's what I think is happening. One of the things you're seeing here is the king of Israel and the queen are being disciplined in romance. So the other log that we need to throw on the fire is...

3. *Be disciplined about creating romance.* There needs to be some discipline about creating a sense of romance between your spouse and you. Back to you husbands who might not naturally be romantic. See, God has given you something in common grace that the thousands of years of men before you did not have: Google. "Romantic creative date \$" Search. There are 77,300,000 ideas in 0.68 seconds.

Maybe you're rolling right now. Maybe it's two dollar signs. I don't know where you are. I don't know your tax bracket. Maybe you have four dollar signs. I don't know you. I don't know what

you're hitting in there. I don't think you can do a half dollar sign, but you'll find some ideas in there. Maybe a cent sign in there to see what comes up.

All you do, brothers and sisters, is plan it. Put it on the calendar. Prepare it. You might be saying, "I don't think my spouse needs that." You might be right. Your spouse might not need that. I'm guessing they're not going to hate it. I'm guessing. I don't know where your marriage is right now. I'm guessing your spouse won't hate you being thoughtful about pursuing and cultivating romance between the two of you.

We're paying attention. We're fighting for fun, building up affection. Then what we see here is they're going to get away. They're going to break up the monotony. They're going to get out of the Monday-through-Sunday rhythms that make us forget and keep us from seeing the person.

Here is what I'm constantly trying to remind myself of. I love my children. I have a 14-year-old daughter who just has my heart. My 11-year-old boy and I are just more and more together, just spending chunks of time. In fact, for the first time ever, on Saturday morning, he kind of joined me. We worked out together. That is the first time that has ever happened. I've been wanting that to happen since he was like 3. He's finally there. He hopped in with us, and it was a blast. Now I just need to make sure he doesn't pass me. I have to keep that bluff in as long as I can.

I don't know that I've ever met a happier soul than my 8-year-old daughter, Norah. She just bubbles with life. It's really hard for her to be upset about much of anything. Here is the thing. All three of them are going to get out of my house. They're going to get older. They're going to get their stuff, and they're going to get out. I'll lament every one of those. I will lament and feel a real sense of loss with every one of those, but I cannot not cultivate a strong relationship with my wife who has me, in another eight or nine years, wondering who I'm married to when the house gets quiet again.

Right now, it's chaos. All the parents with multiple children said, "Amen." The first week of this summer, did anybody feel like an Uber driver, a non-paid Uber driver? Yeah. Just all over the place this week. We had multiple camps. It's just beginning. In the chaos of this season, we must find moments to pull away and work on reconnecting with one another.

That's not expensive. That's not elaborate. This is the king and queen. They're heading out to some orchard somewhere. This can be as simple as, if you're going out with a group of friends, leaving an hour earlier to catch a drink with Mom to catch up. This can be, if you can, trying to find a way to

pull away for just a couple of days, just the two of you, and do more heart-level work, not surface work. Do your best to not talk about the kids.

Learn and cultivate good questions about, "How can I serve you better?" not asking that question in the hopes that you get to dump what you wish they could do better. That's manipulation. That's not love. Find spaces to connect physically. Find spaces to connect emotionally and spiritually, to ask what God is doing. You're already paying attention. Find those spaces to withdraw and connect at a deeper level. The last log is to...

4. *Guard against laziness.* One of the things you saw earlier in the book... Again, if we had time to walk through the whole book, which we certainly don't, we would have covered this earlier. One of the ways she praised Solomon on their wedding day was that he had not been passive but that he had pursued and that he had tried to cultivate. He had been really active in building this relationship on a really firm foundation.

What you see here is yet again, the two of them are guarding against laziness, guarding against putting it on cruise control, but rather trying to continue to mine and get all they can out of this good gift of God's grace in the spouse. It becomes easy after an extended period of time to go, "I have my person. It's cool." Yet, I think there are riches for you, experiences for you, joy for you in not getting lazy but continuing to cultivate that relationship in all areas.

We must guard against laziness. We can't afford to put our marriages on cruise control. Maybe that's finding a marriage retreat to go to every year. Maybe that's a date night every week. You just must fight against being lazy. The way that plays itself out probably in 2017 is you both get in bed with your cell phones. I could feel how awkward the room got. Sorry.

Here is the picture. Let's talk about it. Love your life. It started out hot. That's why you got married. No one is like, "You'll do. Will you marry me?" I've never met the person who has that story. "I have to marry someone. I kind of like you 80 percent of the time. We should do this." You're going, "There is some heat there. I like this person. I like them a lot. Let's get married." There is some heat there.

Over a period of time, it ends up with you two in the same bed together, both of you looking at your phones. There is a living person next to you who you can connect with in all sorts of awesome and intimate ways. I'm not just talking about sex, just conversation. What are you doing? Scrolling

whatever you're scrolling, looking at old restored WWII photos as you went into the rabbit hole, and have no idea how long you've been in there.

You're stalking some dude from high school who you used to play baseball with, and your wife is next to you, looking at Joanna Gaines' feed. You should probably not take your phones into the bedroom. Now, here is the thing. That's not the Bible. I don't have a verse, nor am I trying to lord anything on you other than just to encourage you to think about how to build up intimacy between you and your spouse. It's hard to compete with the phone, and if the phone is there... Just take it out of the equation. It's going to be awkward for a little bit.

"Hey, how was your day?"

"Good."

"Okay."

You'll have to push through that. You'll have to fight through it. Don't be lazy here. There is greater joy to be experienced, greater intimacy to be walked in, to be more fully known than you currently are. Don't believe the romantic comedies you watch. That doesn't come without some work and without some discipline. Don't be lazy.

Here is how I want to end: in a Keller quote. Here is what he said. "According to the Bible, God devised marriage to reflect the saving love for us in Christ." If you remember, what we said early on, quoting from Peter Scazzero, is that marriage shows the depth of God's love. "You're my person. I'm pursuing you. I'm all in on you. You're going to be what is in my mind, what is in my heart. The pursuit of my life is you flourishing as a person."

That is the picture of marriage, the depth of God's love as revealed to us in the coming of Jesus Christ and his life, death, and resurrection. That means that everything related to marriage is a shadow of something greater than itself.

When we're talking about this, when we're talking about keeping the fire of love going, keeping intimacy going, keeping a fervor and zeal for one another going, that's the shadow, but the form is found in this quote and found in Ephesians 5. Every time you see a man move toward a woman,

every time you see a woman move toward a man, every time you see marital romance, you are seeing a picture of God's love for his church, God's love for his people.

I think the way this is seen in one of the ways that is harder for us to digest but maybe is a way we could get it... In the Old Testament, oftentimes, when the people of Israel didn't have ears to hear... It didn't matter if a prophet came and said, "Here is what God says. Here is what God says." They just couldn't hear. God oftentimes would have the prophets do what is called prophetic acts. Because the people wouldn't listen, they would then act out something that the people could see that was discombobulating for them.

One of the greater ones, one of the most well-known of these, is found in the book of Hosea. God comes to Hosea and says, "My people are adulterous. They have left me for other gods. They cannot hear. Therefore, I want you to marry Gomer." He flooded Hosea's heart for Gomer with the love he had for the people of Israel. Hosea's heart is flooded with this unwavering love for Gomer.

The issue, the prophetic act, was that Gomer was a prostitute. Hosea buys her out of prostitution, brings her into his home, establishes safety, provision, care, a space where she is not viewed as a commodity to be consumed but as a soul to be cherished. She flees it and runs back to prostitution. Hosea's heart breaks, and he goes and buys her back, brings her back into that safety, back into that provision, back into that care, back into being valued as a person and not as a commodity to be consumed. She runs again.

Hosea then, heartbroken and grief-stricken, with a tear-stained face, goes and buys her back and brings her back into safety. God's message to an adulterous people is that they were his bride, and he was their husband, and he would continue to seek them and rescue them and save them, even in the midst of disgusting and despicable adultery.

This is the God of the Bible that reveals through marriage, that paints on the canvas of creation via marriage the depth of his love for his bride, the church. Listen. I want your marriages to flourish. It's a picture of the depth of God's love. I want the world to see you in love with your spouse, keeping logs on that fire, letting that fire burn hotter and hotter and hotter.

More than I want that for you, I want you to get a sense of God's unswerving, unwavering devotion to you who are children of God. If you're not a Christian, this is the commitment of our God. What other God in the human imagination moves toward people like this? Is not the message that gods

are angry and ready to destroy? Yet the God we see in the Bible uses this as the illustration to get us to understand the depth of his love.

Maybe you grew up in church, and you're like, "So there's no punishment for sin?" No, no, no. Grace does not make sin safe. It makes sinners safe, but sin has consequences. All sin has consequences. The invitation to you and to me is to come into that place of providence, of care, of safety, of covering, where we might flourish as human beings under the care of our loving Father and, according to biblical imagery, husband. Let's pray.

Father, I pray a prayer of blessing over the marriages in this room. I just ask even now that you would begin to drum up in the hearts of husbands and wives places where they haven't paid attention and maybe steps they need to take in regard to repentance and confession and such. I pray even more than that that they would get a real sense in this kind of romantic picture of marriage, of your pursuit of us, of your love of us, your desire to shelter, care, and provide for us.

I pray again for our singles in this place. I thank you for how they show us the breadth of your love. I ask that you would bless them, especially those who are eager to find a spouse and operate in this other picture, that you would bless them with that in time. We love you. We thank you for your grace and mercy. It's for your beautiful name, amen.